

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 PRS-01 PA-01 /032 W
-----050706Z 002689 /13

R 041920Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3077
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE MANAGUA 2073

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, NU
SUBJECT: MAY 1 IN NICARAGUA

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA SPOKE AT A GON-SPONSORED LABOR RALLY IN MANAGUA ON MAY 1. HE STATED THAT SOCIAL SECURITY COVERAGE WOULD BE EXTENDED TO THE RURAL AREAS AND ANNOUNCED INCREASES IN THE MINIMUM WAGE SCALE. THE RALLY WAS STAGED WITH MINIMAL PARTICIPATION BY THE GOVERNMENT-SUBSIDIZED GENERAL WORKER'S CONFEDERATION-OFFICIAL-ISTA (CGT-O), WHOSE IMPORTANCE AS THE GON'S LABOR INSTRUMENT HAS BEEN DECREASING FOR THE LAST TWO YEARS. COMMUNIST LABOR ORGANIZATIONS STAGED INDOOR RALLIES IN MANAGUA, LEON AND MASAYA. END SUMMARY

1. PRO-GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER NOVEDADES PREDICTED A TURNOUT OF 150,000 AND REPORTED THE ATTENDANCE AS 100,000. MORE LIKELY FIGURE IS 20-30,000 FOR THE CROWD WHICH GATHERED IN THE SQUARE IN FRONT OF THE NATIONAL PALACE IN MANAGUA TO HEAR SPEECHES BY PRESIDENT SOMOZA AND TWO OTHERS. IT WAS COMPOSED MOSTLY OF GOVERNMENT EMPLOY-
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EES AND INCLUDED NUMEROUS VENDORS AND A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF SECURITY PERSONNEL. MANY WERE BROUGHT IN FROM OUTSIDE MANAGUA IN TRUCKS AND BUSES AND WERE QUICKLY RETURNED TO THEIR POINTS OF ORIGIN AFTER THE END OF THE RALLY.

2. SOMOZA SPOKE FROM BEHIND A BULLET-PROOF GLASS SHIELD. HE STRESSED THE GON'S ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING THE LAST TEN YEARS IN THE AREA

OF SOCIAL WELFARE, MAKING SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE OPENING OF THE HIGHWAY FROM THE PACIFIC COAST TO PUERTO CABEZAS, ON THE ATLANTIC COAST. THE PRESIDENT ANNOUNCED THAT SOCIUP SECUIRYT INSTOTITE (INSS) COVERAGE WOULD BE EXTENDED TO THE RURAL AREAS, BEGINNING WITH THE DEPARTMENTS OF LEON AND CHINANDEGA. HE ALSO ANNOUNCED A NEW MINIMUM WAGE SCALE, INVOLVING INCREASES OF 25 PERCENT FOR RURAL WORKERS AND 20 PERCENT FOR URBAN WORKERS. THIS SCALE REPLACES THE ONE THAT CAME INTO EFFECT IN MAY 1975. (AIRGRAM FOLLOWS). SOMOZA SPOKE WITH MORE EMOTION THAN USUAL, BUT HIS REMARKS RECEIVED ONLY PERFUNCTORY APPLAUSE. ONLY WHEN HE ANNOUNCED THE NEW MINIMUM WAGE SCALE DID THE APPLAUSE TRANSCEND HIS IMMEDIATE GROUP.

3. SOMOZA'S SPEECH CONTAINED NO REFERENCE TO ORGANIZED LABOR. FOR THE SECOND YEAR IN A ROW, NO LEADER OF THE GON-SUBSIDIZED GENERAL WORKERS' CONFEDERATION- OFICIALISTA (CGT-O) SPOKE AT THE RALLY. INSTEAD, LAST YEAR'S PRECEDENT OF HAVING TWO POLITICAL UNKNOWNNS, ONE SPEAKING ON BEHALF OF "WOMEN" AND THE OTHER ON BEHALF OF "RURAL WORKERS", WAS FOLLOWED. THE MINIMAL PARTICIPATION OF THE CGT-O IN WHAT USED TO BE ONE OF ITS PRIMARY FUNCTIONS IS FURTHER EVIDENCE OF ITS DECLINE AS THE GON'S LABOR INSTRUMENT.

4. THE ORIT-AFFILIATED LABOR CONFEDERATION (CUS) DID NOT CELEBRATE MAY 1. THE COMMUNIST-CONTROLLED GENERAL WORKERS' CONFEDERATION-INDEPENDENT (CGT-I) HELD SMALL INDOOR MEETINGS IN MANAGUA, LEON AND MASAYA.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESIDENT, PUBLIC DEMONSTRATIONS, SPEECHES, SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS
Control Number: n/a
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977MANAGU02073
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770157-0866
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From: MANAGUA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
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Line Count: 88
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Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 847f169b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2646029
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MAY 1 IN NICARAGUA SUMMARY: PRESIDENT SOMOZA SPOKE AT A GON-SPONSORED LABOR RALLY IN MANAGUA ON MAY 1. HE STATED THAT SOCIAL SECURITY C
TAGS: ELAB, NU, (SOMOZA DEBAYLE, ANASTASIO)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/847f169b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009